



PART 2 - THE CHURCH IN PROPHECY. - THE CHURCH AGE IN REVELATION 2 AND 3.

The Church Age in Revelation 2 and 3.

Outline of Revelation in 1:19: Write the things

- (1) which YOU HAVE SEEN (chapter 1 - the vision of Christ) and
- (2) the things THAT ARE (chapters 2 and 3 - the Church-Age) and
- (3) the THINGS THAT WILL TAKE PLACE AFTER THIS (chapters 4-22).

After the Church-Age comes: The Tribulation (chapters 4-18),
The Second Coming (chapter 19), The Millennium (chapter 20),
The Eternal State (chapters 21,22).

To confirm that the Church-Age ends after chapter 3 and the Tribulation ('the things after this') starts in chapter 4, see Revelation 4:1:

AFTER THESE THINGS (the seven churches) I looked and behold a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me saying, Come up here (a perfect picture of the Rapture) and I will show you

THINGS WHICH MUST TAKE PLACE AFTER THIS

(this is exactly the same phrase as in 1:19).

THE MYSTERY OF THE CHURCH AS THE LORD'S CANDLESTICK.

(A revelation of the CHURCH as God's anointed WITNESS). Revelation 1 should end with verse 19, as the second phase of the revelation ('the things that are now') starts in verse 20. This is the revelation of the PRESENT CHURCH-AGE.

The MYSTERY of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks.

The seven stars are the messengers of the seven churches:

and the seven candlesticks which you saw are the seven churches (Revelation 1:20).

This introduces the letters to the seven churches. So these letters are the revelation of the mystery of the CHURCHES MINISTRY as GOLDEN CANDLESTICKS (light bearers) through the Age.

We have seen that the present operation of the Kingdom is by the sowing of the Word. The CHURCH is anointed to preach the Gospel, to be God's witnesses until the end of the Age. The Key phrase of the Book of Acts is that the WORD and the CHURCH grew and multiplied (6:7, 9:31, 12:24, 16:5, 19:20). According to the Parables, the Church-Age would characterised by the sowing of God's Word (the Sower), with a variety of results in different people (soils). Overall it would result in a rapid growth of the true Church (the Mustard Seed). This would be opposed by satan first by persecutions, then by worldly temptations (the Sower). Meanwhile satan is also sowing false seed (the Wheat and Tares), causing a rapid growth of apostate churches and cults (the Leaven) puffing up Christendom (making the church look larger than it is in truth). Thus there will be a growth of both the true church and the false church from the true and false sowings. So we can see the outworking of these four parables in the Church-Age. The letters in Revelation 2 and 3 give us a more detailed overview of Church history. The seven letters describe seven successive periods of the church, typified by seven chosen churches of the first century. These letters show how the Parables are worked out in the course of the Mystery Age.

The seven letters are Christ's assessment of how true the churches have been to the Word, in keeping and spreading it and in resisting the sowing of false doctrine. Of course, they were written to seven literal churches at that time but it is clear they are also for all churches throughout the Age. Each letter says: He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches - (3:13). Certain statements clearly have a wider meaning than would apply only to a local church. They are for the VISIBLE CHURCH (which includes believers and unbelievers), seven being the number for perfection and completion. These seven churches represent the seven kinds of churches that exist throughout the age. However, one type dominates a particular era of Church history. So these letters give a PROPHETIC PICTURE of the seven eras of Church history. The seven churches represent the whole Church over 2000 years. Thus, the whole Church Age is in Rev 2 and 3. Each dominates a stage of Church history and continues to the end. Their nature is revealed by their names. In this revelation of Church history we can also see the outworking of the mystery parables of Matthew 13.

*1. EPHESUS (Rev 2:1-7) To the angel (messenger or minister) of the church of Ephesus write,
These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands:

HOME

BOOKS

- The Imminent Invasion of Israel
- Moriah, Golgotha and the Garden Tomb
- The Sabbath Issue
- Creation Evolution Revolution
- New Book: Daniel's 70 Weeks
- Sodom and Gomorrah
- Joshua's Jericho
- The Seven Times of The Gentiles
- Keys to Long-Life
- Blood Covenant
- Life After Death
- Positional Truth - Who We Are In Christ
- Church Handbook
- The Anointing Message (Jubilee)
- The Gospel of John Commentary Chapters 1-11 (by chapter)
- The Keys Of Time (Bible Chronology)
- [End-Time Prophecy](#)
- Growing Up Spiritually
- Pictures Of Salvation (Types and Shadows)
- Overcoming in Life

ABOUT US

EVENTS

TEACHINGS

BIBLE COMMENTARY

MEDIA

SHOP

DONATE

CONTACT

I know your works, your labour, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have laboured for My name's sake and have not become weary.

Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.

Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.

But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.

EPHESUS represents the church of the first century, the Apostolic Church. The Church in Ephesus became the major church of its time. Ephesus means: 'desired, beloved' and this spoke of the close loving relationship that the first generation of Christians had with the Lord. This was the time of 'First Love' seen in the Book of Acts. They showed their love for the Lord in evangelism and love for one another. However, in the second generation their love for the Lord had faded somewhat, although they still worked hard and were committed to evangelism and were Word-centred and resisted false doctrine but it had become more duty than love and therefore their witness was in danger of fizzling out.

So, this was an Age of TRUE SOWING (The Parable of the Sower):

1. To Israel (hardened ground) where the 'birds' came to steal the word (false Judaistic teachers working on peoples lack of understanding).
2. To the Gentiles (other soils).

They were true to God's programme (revealed in the parables) of sowing the Word and watching out for the leaven - maximising the positive growth and minimising the negative. The church won the first battle with false teachers and grew quickly (The Mustard Seed).

2. SMRYNA (2:8-11): To the angel of the church in Smyrna write, These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life:

I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have Tribulation ten days.

Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.

Smyrna means myrrh, bitterness. Myrrh is associated with death and embalming. Smyrna represents the suffering Church in the era of Roman Persecution (96-313 AD). Christians at this time were refused protection given to the Jews because the Jews slandered them. They were killed for not worshipping the emperor.

The persecution for 10 DAYS corresponds to the 10 emperors who officially persecuted the Church.

1. Domitian (AD 96)
2. Trajan (98-117)
3. Hadrian (117-138)
4. Antonius Pius (138-161)
5. Marcus Aurelius (161-180)
6. Septimus Severus (193-211)
7. Maximin (235-238)
8. Decius (249-251)
9. Valarian (251-260)
10. Diocletian (284-305)

In the Parable of Sower, this was the time of the second attack, when satan sent persecution and affliction because of the word (to stop it spreading). This is his external attack. Jesus commends Smyrna for enduring (holding onto the word) in suffering, and comforts them (2:8,11). Their faithfulness under fire meant there was even more growth (the Mustard Tree).

*3. PERGAMOS (v12-17)

To the angel of the church in Pergamos write, These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword:

I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where satan dwells.

But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.

SUNDAY SERVICES

Sundays at 11am and 6pm
Cheney School Hall
Cheney Lane - Headington
Oxford - England - UK
OX3 7QH

©2022 Google

Pergamos means thoroughly married. It represents the era brought in by Constantine (313-800 AD), who began the process of Christianity becoming an accepted faith and then later the official state religion. This, intermarriage of Church with State meant an influx of unbelievers bringing in pagan ways and idolatry, rather than a pure Church reaching into the world. The world was joined to, and came into the Church, which laid the basis for worse apostasy to follow. So, in this letter, we see false doctrine infiltrating the Church. Jesus rebuked them for accepting the teaching of Balaam - intermarriage with heathen resulting in their ways of worship being adopted (for example - icons, images, idolatry and superstition). They also accepted the doctrine of the Nicolaitans (people-rulers). At this time there arose in the Church a ruling class of priests (a clergy/laity divide) and the Church became ecclesiastical. The Church became larger, richer and politically powerful. It held fast to the orthodox doctrines of the Bible: you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith. However, it was compromised and spiritually weakened by the infiltration of false doctrines and practices.

In the Parable of Sower, this was the time of the next attack - the thorns and weeds (the desire for other things - such as riches, power, and pleasure). This internal attack succeeded where the external attack of persecution had failed. Worldliness and compromise came in - the Church became a mixture. The double sowing in the Wheat and Tares was now well under way. The Leaven (of false teaching) was growing (the Church moved away from the literal interpretation of God's Word). The Church became puffed up, looking outwardly large and powerful, but inwardly (spiritually) it was weaker as now many church members were not born-again.

*4. THYATIRA (2:18-29)

To the angel of the church in Thyatira write,

These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass:

I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first.

Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into GREAT TRIBULATION, unless they repent of their deeds. I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.

Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths - of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden. But hold fast what you have till I come.

And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations - He shall rule them with a rod of iron; they shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels - as I also have received from My Father; and I will give him THE MORNING STAR

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Thyatira means continual sacrifice, a reference to the Roman Catholic MASS. Thyatira represents the Dark Ages (800 AD onwards) and the development of the Mediaeval Roman Catholic Church. The Church claimed exclusive power to interpret and add doctrines to God's Word. Nicolaitanism grew with the growing Papal claims and dominance (exercising great power and gaining great riches, especially through indulgences and threats of hell for not obeying church dictates). The clergy-laity divide grew with the Church being defined as the just the clergy. To be saved the people must submit to the Church and receive mass, in which the clergy alone have the power to change the bread into the real body of Christ which is then offered up as a sacrifice. Only clergy can drink Communion wine. Salvation is not by grace through faith, but by works done in submission to the church.

The false church-system that developed is characterised by Jezebel, one who falsely claims to speak from God. In the Old Testament, Jezebel replaced true worship in Israel, by an idolatrous and immoral pagan worship that originated in Babylon. Likewise, the Thyatiran church was dominated by Jezebel. True New Testament worship has been replaced by something totally different, which is IDOLATROUS (spiritual fornication) including worship of Mary and saints as well as Christ, with the use of icons and images. All these, as well as the ceremonial practices, festivals and clothes; the organisation and powers of the priestly caste, as well as the claims to be the one true religious body which also has the right to hold the reigns of political power, can be shown to derive from the ancient Babylonian Religion (originated at the Tower of Babel).

Jesus warns against committing spiritual adultery with Jezebel. For she draws attention away from Christ and trusting Him alone, onto herself, so that people trust in the Church for their salvation. However, Jesus commended the much good work done by true believers within this corrupted system.

This Age is dominated by the growth of Leaven (false doctrine).

Ten false doctrines that developed:

- (1) Justification by works (rather than by grace through faith).
- (2) Baptismal regeneration (usually as a baby).
- (3) Worship of images (violating the God's Commandment).
- (4) Celibacy
- (5) Purgatory
- (6) Transubstantiation (the Mass)
- (7) Indulgences
- (8) Confession (to priests)
- (9) Penance
- (10) Mariology (the worship of Mary)

Jesus gives a warning. Jezebel, the Roman Catholic system and those who believe in the church and its frills rather than in Christ (her children and those who commit spiritual adultery with her) will miss the Rapture and go into the Great Tribulation and be destroyed: I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into GREAT TRIBULATION (v22,23). This shows that the Catholic Church will continue to the end of the Age and

continue into the Tribulation where it will form part of Mystery Babylon. However, the true believers within her midst will receive the MORNING STAR, which is a promise of the Rapture.

*5. SARDIS (3:1-6)

To the angel of the church in Sardis write,

These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars:

I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.

Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent.

Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a THIEF, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.

You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Sardis means those escaping. It refers to those escaping from the Roman Catholic system. Thus, it refers to the next Church period - the Reformation (1500 AD onwards). This was an Age of true SOWING. Much good work was done in reforming the Church. The Word was received again. There was a return to the Bible as the sole authority for faith and practice, and its literal interpretation. As a result idolatry was removed and justification by faith restored. There was great growth of Bible-believing Protestant churches (the Mustard Seed).

But the Reformation did not go far enough. Many traditions were not changed and there was little spiritual life - you are dead. The basic problem of the union of Church and State persisted which caused nominal Christianity. This was further encouraged by the continued practice of baby-baptism. The belief grew that miracles passed away with the apostles. All these factors meant that the new life was quickly lost - as seen in all traditional Protestant denominations. This rejection of the life and power of God opened the door to later apostasy. Liberalism and the rejection of the Bible and its miracles resulted in the spiritual death of many Protestant Churches.

Jesus warns the unbelieving people in these churches that He will come to them a THIEF in the night:

If you will not watch, I will come upon you as a THIEF, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.

This is a reference to His coming in the Rapture. From those who miss the Rapture it will be like a thief in the night. This shows that these churches will continue to the end and will continue into the Tribulation, forming part of the One-World Church (Mystery Babylon). However, at the Rapture the true believers will be dressed in white (the glory of God, shining through their resurrection bodies).

* 6. PHILADELPHIA (3:7-13).

To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write,

These things says He who is holy, He who is true,

He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens.

I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.

Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie - indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. Behold, I am coming quickly!

Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.

He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. And I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Philadelphia means brotherly love.

This wholly positive letter indicates that there will be positive developments from the Reformation. This describes the revived Protestant churches (1700AD onwards). There involved a restoration of life to match the restoration of doctrine. It was the first response to the deadness in Protestant churches. There were great revivals with Wesley, Whitfield, Finney. There was the recovery of the supernatural gifts through Pentecostalism and the Charismatic movement and it was the start of great Missions outreaches - the open door (with Hudson Taylor, Judson, Carey and many more). They were highly commended. They used the OPEN DOOR to reach every place on earth. Many Free and Independent churches started because the historic churches could not hold the new-life. It was a great age of evangelism (the Sower) and growth (the Mustard Seed). These churches will also see a great turning of Jews to the Lord. They will continue until the end of the age, for they are promised they will escape the Tribulation: I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth; for they will be raptured: Behold, I am coming quickly! (v10,11).

* 7. LAODICEA (3:14-22)

To the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write,

These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God:

I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot.

So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.

Because you say, I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing

- and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked
- I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.

To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

LAODICEA means people ruling. This refers to a rejection of God's Word and Spirit replacing them with man's opinions (humanism). It describes the development of the Apostate Protestant churches (1890AD onwards). It marks the last period of Church history and so is another confirmation that we are near the end. This is the second response to deadness of the SARDIS church, namely apostasy. The churches that rejected the move of the Spirit and missions (see PHILADELPHIA) went apostate, receiving Liberal Theology and the equality of other religions. The Leaven grew quickly through the denominations starting from the Seminaries. The result was widespread LIBERAL theology and cults (arising to fill the needs the apostate churches were not meeting).

Christ is on the outside (Revelation 3:20). According to His own description, this church is full of unsaved people, which is why He extends an evangelistic appeal to the whole church. They are lukewarm. They are not cold, for they profess some kind of religious faith. But neither are they hot, for they are not true believers. It is a false unsaved church, rich in goods and self-sufficient - seeing man as the answer. It sees Jesus Christ just as a holy man and denies His Deity and His Death and Resurrection as our only hope of salvation. It denies anything miraculous, even the power of prayer. It is spiritually destitute.

Apostasy is departure from the truth of the Gospel.

This must come to a head in the last days (1Timothy 4:1-3, 2Timothy 3:5; 2Peter 2:1-22).

Denial of the Trinity (1John 2:22,23).

Denial of the Incarnation (1John 4:2,3, 2Jn 7).

Denial of the Second Coming - (2Pet 3:3,4).

Denial of the Deity of Christ (2Pet2:1).

Denial of the work of Christ on the Cross (2Pet 2:1)

So the false church (Leaven) continues to grow alongside the true Church (Mustard Tree) until the end. Christ warns that He will spew this apostate church out of His mouth (v16) and offers people a chance to repent. After the Rapture occurs, the church on earth will be totally APOSTATE (THYATIRAN and LAODICIAN) so Jesus will spew it out. After the Rapture these unite as Mystery Babylon - calling herself the Bride of Christ, but in reality she is the false church - the Harlot - committing spiritual adultery in worshipping other things apart from the true Christ. She will suffer special judgments in the Tribulation (Rev 17). We see forces at work now to unite Christendom into a One-World apostate church.

These 7 churches define the 7 phases of Church history. They reveal the witness of the church throughout the age. They are commended on how they hold forth God's Word (the Sower) and fight the false teaching. The letters are a revelation of the MYSTERY of the seven stars (church leadership) and seven candlesticks which represent the CHURCHES as WITNESSES to the truth of God, as they hold forth the light of Christ (Revelation 1:20).